

BACCALAUREATE

Addressed to the Senior Class,

ON THE DAY OF

COMMENCEMENT, 1843,

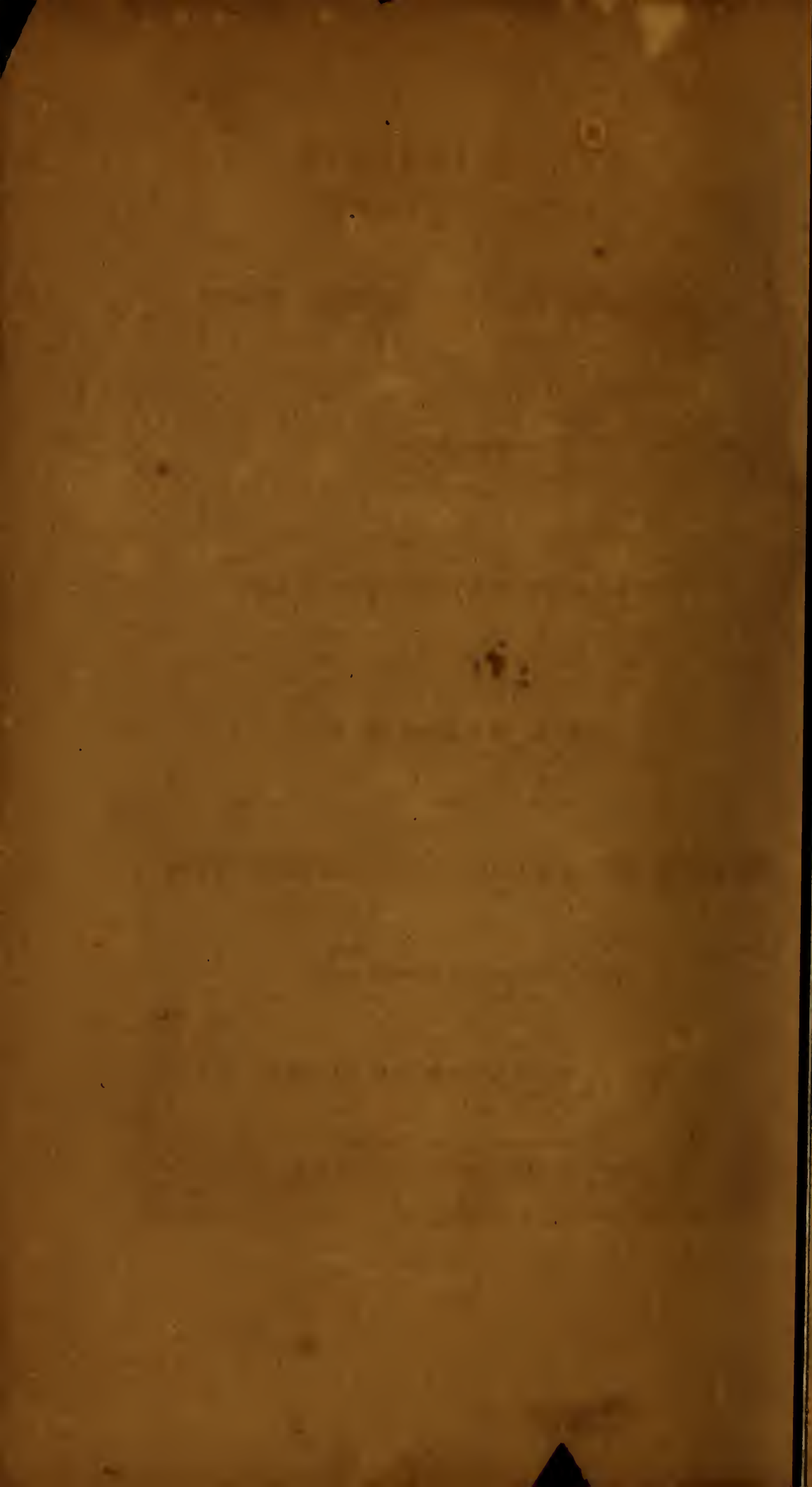
BY A. WYLIE, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY.

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA.

PRINTED BY M. L. DEAL.

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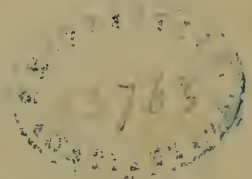
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BACCALAUREATE.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN:

When a son leaves the family circle in the midst of which he has been brought up to the years of manhood, and goes out into the world to act for himself, it is natural that his parents, full of anxiety for his future welfare, should follow him to the gate with their blessings and prayers; and having given him such advice as may in some measure supply his lack of experience, commit him, in a parting Adieu, to the care of that Good Providence which only can conduct him in safety through the perils and uncertainties of his future course.

Such, in some respects, is the situation in which you are now placed; and such the office which this Institution, whose children you are, performs to you to-day. To-day you are under her tuition and authority; to-morrow you will be so no longer.

What a solemn moment is this! Let me improve it, by delivering to you some words of counsel which it may be useful for you to remember. But what shall I say? What can I say that has not been already said? On former occasions, during your course of studies, it has fallen in my way to treat, imperfectly it is true, but in great sincerity and freedom, of almost every subject of interest to you as rational and accountable creatures, as individuals or as members of the great family of mankind. I can therefore, only select, from the whole mass of subjects which have engaged your attention, some one of importance enough to make it a fit theme of remark on the present occasion. The occasion seems to require that it be practical. I have chosen such a subject. It is Veracity.

Veracity is that, in the moral character of man, which disposes him to speak truth.

But as truth is a word of more meanings than one, and veracity respects one only of these, it becomes necessary to separate and distinguish that one from the rest; so that we may fix our attention upon it, and not wander in our remarks.

When a man has objects in his presence, views them, and thus gets ideas of them; between the objects and himself there is but one door, or passage, through which the ideas have to pass to his mind: that is the door of his apprehension. So let us call it: and when hereafter we speak of objects as related to ideas we will call them Archetypes.

Now, in the case of ideas passing through this door, it may happen,

that there is a conformity between the ideas and their archetypes. This conformity is *truth*. For distinction let us call it *physical truth*. Error is its opposite.

Again: One may observe or apprehend things, and from his apprehensions he may draw inferences; and if not a man of sense he will not only be apt to draw wrong inferences from his apprehensions, but mix them up in a confused jumble with his apprehensions: and in that case his ideas may be in conformity with their archetypes, but his inferences may not be in conformity with his ideas. This conformity is also called *truth*. Let us for distinction call it *logical truth*. *Falsehood* is its opposite. An example will illustrate these distinctions. The sons of the Patriarch Jacob brought to him the coat of his beloved Joseph, which they had, in order to deceive him, dipped in the blood of a kid. When he saw it he knew it to be his son's garment, and exclaimed "Joseph is torn to pieces by wild beasts." Here was a physical truth, a logical truth and a logical falsehood. The coat he saw *was* torn and bloody: here there was a conformity between the idea and its archetype. It was physically true: no error, no illusion of the fancy. Again; he compares his present perceptions of the coat with his ideas of it in the memory; and infers that it is Joseph's: here there was a conformity between the perceptions and the memory. It was logically true; the coat *was* Joseph's. No falsehood as to that. But he infers from *this* truth what was logically not true. It was a falsehood that he uttered. Joseph was living and well—well in body—though, we may well suppose, sorely distressed in mind, having been sold for a slave to the Ishmaelites by his hard-hearted brethren.

These, let me observe by the way, are no idle distinctions. Great injustice is often done by allowing witnesses to mix and blend wrong inferences with facts in their testimony: a thing which simple people are very apt to do; and wicked people always do; and even good and wise people may sometimes do;—that is, when biassed by prejudice, or passion, or interest. But as this, in the language of Lord Bacon who was himself an infamous example of it, is one of the "Idola Tribus," and a wickedness to which human nature, in all, is prone, it may be supposed that the good and wise will be specially on their guard against it.

When objects are not present to a man, he can know nothing of them but through testimony delivered to him by another, to *whom* they have been present. Besides the door already mentioned, through which ideas have passed into this man's mind, whom we shall call the Witness, there are yet two other doors, through which they have to pass, in order to enter the mind of the second

person, whom we may call the Judge. The first is the door of utterance. By this the ideas of the witness get out into words, uttered by the mouth, or written by the pen; or clothe themselves in natural signs, in the looks, tones, gestures, or in such conventional signs as men may agree to use in their intercourse.

It is very curious and amusing as well as useful to observe how ideas come out through this door. The idea rarely gets out in the naked simplicity, and exact dimensions, and proper color, and shape of it. It comes out dressed; sometimes in full costume adjusted according to the nicest rules of the rhetorical toilet—sometimes flashing and founcing in all the superfluous finery of upstart nobility at a coronation,—sometimes tawdry and without any of the “callidissima simplicitatis imitatio” which shews the union of taste and genius,—sometimes primp and precise as the dandy,—sometimes sly and roguish in appearance to provoke laughter:—and, what is more curious still, sometimes an idea will be so brought out that a part only and that a very small part is seen,—and on the other hand it is sometimes so shown as to distend itself, or to multiply itself like the image reflected from a multangular mirror.

Such is the effect of figures of speech.—What I desire you here to notice however is, not that *form* which an idea takes when it puts on its habiliments of dress before it comes out at the door of utterance; but the shape into which it must necessarily be compressed to get out at the door at all. Language is imperfect; so that those who very well understand the force of words do not say always the very thing that is in their minds and which they intend to say, but it, and something else; or, it, but not all of it; or, not it, but something like it or connected with it. Now, such being the imperfection of language, in order to know what a writer or speaker really means by any particular word, or sentence, or paragraph, we must look at what precedes and what follows, and then at the general drift of the whole, and the occasion, and the speaker, and the audience. And, after all, we may not be absolutely certain, especially if the writing be ancient, what was the meaning of the author.

It was, I suppose, on this account that the Roman church shut up the Bible from the unlearned. This was wrong. Among us Protestants, every one who has impudence and a voluble tongue undertakes to interpret the Holy Oracles. This also is wrong.

When there is not a conformity between what one intends to say and the words that he utters—truth, in a certain sense, is violated. This we may call *rhetorical truth*. Its opposite is a *blunder*.

Again: there is another door through which ideas, being uttered, have yet to pass, before they arrive at their journey's end, and become fairly lodged in the mind of the Judge; and that may be called the Hermeneutical door. In the language of the old divines, it is "the door of Entrance." Of this the understanding of the Judge, that is, the man to whom testimony is delivered, keeps the key. And if there be an exact conformity between the ideas uttered by the witness and those received by the Judge, truth is preserved. This kind of truth we may call *Hermeneutical*. Its opposite is a mistake, a misapprehension, a misunderstanding.

Once more, there may be a conformity between the ideas which a witness *intends* to convey and the ideas actually in his mind.—This is called *moral* truth. Its opposite is *a-lie*. Its essence lies in the intention to deceive.

Now, it is about *this species* of truth that we are now to speak. Veracity is the disposition which prompts a man to speak the truth in this sense of the word.

The instrument employed in making the communication is of no account in the matter. Whether the lie be propagated by the tongue, by the Press, by actions, or by whatever other means a man may employ, it is all the same; only that, as in other cases, the criminality must be estimated according to the extent and duration of the evil aimed at, and the coolness and deliberateness with which it is perpetrated and the pertinacity and perseverance with which it is followed up. Lies, for these reasons, which are published through the press show a much greater degree of wickedness than such as are whispered by the tongue. How far the obligation of veracity extends has been made a question among casuists.

It is conceded by all, I believe, that it is right to employ stratagems in war for the purpose of deceiving an enemy. Yet it has never been sufficiently considered that war in itself is not only the greatest of earthly calamities, but also, unless it be strictly defensive the greatest of crimes; and consequently that the practice of deceiving, which it involves, is not for *that reason* justifiable.

The doctrine of Paley, who founds virtue on utility, let me remind you, has been examined and rejected, in the course of study which you have completed in this Institution. It is false in itself, and of evil tendency. And this other doctrine, which allows one to tell a lie whenever the good to be expected from it will overbalance the evil resulting from the practice in general, is, as you have been taught, based on the same foundation with the general doctrine of utility, and falls to the ground with it. It is open, moreover, to this objection, that it would, if adopted in practice, result

in this, that every man would violate moral truth whenever he conceived it for his interest so to do.

Pious Frauds, once not only practiced, but justified in the schools, find no advocates in the present day.

A madman we may deceive, as we may deceive a mad animal: but this is no exception to the law of veracity, which contemplates rational beings only.

An equivocation is, or is not, a lie, according to the intention of him who uses it. To say that which is true in one sense, but false in that sense in which we know, from its connexion with circumstances, it will be understood, is to palter with the conscience in a double sense: and conscience, let us remember, like the Lord of the conscience, cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked with impunity.

Expressions of civility, and such forms of speech as polite usage requires, ought to be used in all sincerity. They are current at their value. The sycophant and the flatterer try to increase their worth, by arts of their own. But they are lying arts: and, for the most part, as vain as they are detestable.

A lie may be told by concealing a very small portion of the truth. Nay, more: the whole truth, as addressed to the ear, may be spoken to the ear again; and yet the one who reports it may be guilty of lying: for a thousand things belonging to *the scene*, and by which the words, as originally spoken, may have been modified, may be omitted and then the thing reported will not be true. The words "Destroy this temple and I will rear it again in three days," had been really spoken; but as they were reported by the false witness before that tribunal at which The Just One was condemned, they were false; for they were reported without the explanatory gesture, with which they must have been accompanied as they were originally uttered.

But it is unnecessary to detain you longer on this part of the subject. A mind which is truly upright and free from guile will readily detect and instinctively detest those sinister arts which involve in them any thing like fraud or deceit. I mean when presented in the way of temptation: for such a mind is peculiarly liable to be imposed upon and duped by such arts when practiced by others. It is as natural for innocence to trust; as for knavery to be suspicious.

The vice of mendacity, like all other vices, comes on by degrees, beginning with cases which admit of such defence as, to the conscience of the unpractised transgressor, may seem plausible: and thus the mind slides into the vicious habit by insensible degrees, impos-

ing upon itself, at every step which it takes in its downward course, fallacies which seem still more and more satisfactory. For the path which declines from the way of truth becomes not only more precipitous as it proceeds; it also becomes darker, leading such as walk along it deeper and deeper into those shades of death which at length enclose them on every side, shutting them out completely from the pure light of heaven.

It will be useful, then, to have in view those cases of departure from the strict laws of veracity which are usually considered the most excusable, and with which the practice of violating the truth commonly begins. I will mention some of them.

The case of things said in confidence is considered by some as requiring in the person to whom they have been committed a flat denial, when they are interrogated on the matter. In this case, says John Randolph, in his "Letters," it is right to violate the truth for the sake of the truth. But this is a solecism in morals—Where is the necessity? Cannot the person refuse to *be* interrogated? Or—which is often the wisest course—can he not, in the first instance, refuse to be made the depository of the secret? I do not say, that success in a laudable enterprise may not require, that measures taken to promote it should be concealed from such as have an interest in defeating it, and therefore from the community in general. When such cases do occur, let the secret be kept inviolate. But, except in times of commotion, they seldom occur.

My advice to you, on this subject, is, to be very cautious how you entangle yourselves in alliances of any kind, and especially to be careful in entering into secret combinations for any purpose. Good purposes can, for the most part, be pursued by open means: and those who pursue bad ones are not to be trusted or received as friends. In respect to such let this be your motto: "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united."

Another case, of the class which I am now mentioning, is that in which truth may be violated by mere silence. There are persons, who from motives of prudence—which, in that wrong sense of it in which it is often understood, is, in truth, what it has been called "a rascally virtue,"—will withhold the truth when it is their duty to make it known. They do not like trouble; they are afraid of displeasing people. Where a cause is pending in a court of justice, he who withholds testimony which may be necessary for the vindication of the innocent or for maintaining the just cause, acts the part of a traitor to both truth and righteousness. Yet, the criminality in this case, sits lightly on the consciences of people, because *they*

have done nothing. To do nothing is often as heinous offence against God and man as to do what is positively and even violently wrong, wicked and unjust.

But if the cause be brought before the bar of public opinion, the point of duty may not be so clear. Many things are to be considered. The public may not be the proper tribunal. It may not be competent. It may care not. The answer may be concealed,—the accusation indefinite. The burden of proof may be thrown on the accused by requiring him to prove a negative. In such cases let contempt shew itself by silence. Let the Public give itself no trouble. Let it be understood that he who before the public makes charges against another, such as I have described, while he shrinks from responsibility by concealing himself, does, by the very act, say that he himself *knows* them to be false. Rest assured, young Gentlemen, that this is the light in which, as yet, such things are regarded in this our beloved country: and so will they continue to be regarded by the people, as long as they deserve to be free. And they will remain free not much longer than they deserve to be free.

I cannot but think that, in those political contests which in free countries must always be going on, the temptations to violate the truth, at least in a negative way, are so great and urgent, that there is no possibility to escape them, but by keeping one's self constantly well informed as to the true state of public affairs and the character of the men who aspire to serve the Public, and of the measures they profess to adopt.

But this is a large subject. A hint at it in passing is all that we can afford. What I would have you guard against is the maxim, that "All is fair in politics." A lie is fair no where;—fitting, no where, but in the mouth of the Father of lies. Pity and shame, is it, that *his* language should be, with any of the human family,—vernacular!—oracular!

There is yet another case, that I am constrained to mention, in which a proper regard for truth forbids a man to be silent. I could state the case directly, and in few words: but I wish to state it in such manner that the evidence of the truth of the statement may go along with the statement. Truth is infinite. I speak of physical truth and in that large sense in which I have used the term physical on this occasion. Truth is infinite. It is that about which all science is conversant. The love of it is Philosophy. It is infinite, and therefore we love it. It is infinite, and therefore we seek after it more and more; since that portion of it which is known to us is nothing at all compared with what we know not. To extend the boundaries of human knowledge by the discovery of new truths,

is a great and glorious enterprise. It has kindled the fire of a noble enthusiasm in all highly gifted minds, in all ages of the world.— But it is also an enterprize in which the dullest are employed.— They are forced upon it. The very infant is forced upon it. His safety and comfort depend upon his learning new truths. The capacity for it is denied to none but the poor idiot. But here is a distinction: those truths on which the safety of the individual depends are laid open to all, and all have the capacity to find them; whereas those truths on which the well-being and improvement of communities and of the whole race depend are, for the most part, recondite, and not to be found out but on diligent research and investigation by minds of a superior order: and, we believe, there are truths, which, though not discoverable in themselves, Our Father in heaven has been pleased to reveal to us in a supernatural way.

Now, what is a man to do, as a lover of truth, in regard to these several classes of verities, supposing he believes them? Is he bound to profess them? or may he conceal them in silence? With regard to those of the two first classes, there never has been any doubt. With regard to the second it is considered a duty which we owe to our country and mankind to profess them and act up to them; so that if, for instance, we believe in the truths of democracy, we are bound to profess them, avow, and, if need be, fight for them. But what is one to do with regard to those of the third class? By the same rule of sincerity he must undoubtedly profess them. As a man of truth he cannot do otherwise. Thus, if a man believes in One God, he must worship God according to his belief: and if he also believes in a Mediator he must worship God through a Mediator. But if he does not believe? Then let him profess his non-belief.— But if, in either of the cases, there be not a reasonable conformity between the belief, or the non-belief, and the profession, then to express the thing in plain English, the man lies. The profession is a lie; the life is a lie. There are lies remorselessly told in this way, to what extent and in what numbers, it were hard to say. Thou believest there is one God. Why then dost thou lie about it, by never worshipping him, and thus practically denying his existence?

I would here further remark, that, as the Protestant world is conveniently cut up into sections, a regard to truth requires of a man that he attach himself to that section whose profession approaches in all respects nearest to his own belief. By remaining in a body whose tenets do not accord with his mature and deliberate convictions of truth he acts a mendacious part; and the lie, thus acted on, the more closely it is covered in his bosom, the more deeply and

surely will its corrupting influence strike in upon the vital parts of his character, till the whole is infected.

In affairs of trade the modes of deception and imposition are said to be so prevalent, that it has become a matter of common complaint, that the fair dealer cannot hold his own with the multitude of his less scrupulous competitors.

In the business of education, where above all others there should be nothing but truth, there is often the greatest deception.

Certificates, recommendations, and even diplomas, it is commonly said, are less to be depended on than formerly.

Time would fail were I to go on to enumerate the various ways which men take to deceive one another and the public. You have to learn and know what they are that you may know how to defend yourselves against them: especially, you have to learn them that you may avoid them in practice. He who would go by a way which heretofore he has never travelled, does well to note beforehand on a chart the devious paths which he is in danger of mistaking for the right one; and especially if the right one be less beaten and frequented than the others.

Not that I would have you to look for deceit under every good appearance. Far otherwise. The world has in it true men, many of them. Were it not so, who could endure to reside in it? Yet, of these many good men and true, who are in the world, you might spend a lifetime in the search, and yet not find one. *To find a true man, he must be true who makes the search.*

But, be the amount of truth that there is in the world what it may, let it be the care and study of each one of you, not to diminish but to increase it.

I would, therefore, sum up what I have to say on this part of the subject in this general caution, to avoid a loose and unguarded manner of speech on all subjects, and especially on matters touching the conduct and character of others. There are many, some of whom it might be uncharitable to denominate downright liars, who nevertheless allow their tongues to run on at a round rate whenever their passions are in the least excited, which with such people is pretty generally the case; for if no other occasion of excitement be present, they can always create one, if in no other way, by the echo of their own voices. Such people say whatever comes uppermost, rashly, harshly, and without the slightest grounds often for their ill-natured remarks. They seem even to take a pride in it, thinking, perhaps, that it shews a manly and independent spirit to think as they please, and to speak out boldly whatever they think. Such, they say, is their opinion, and they care not all the world knows it.

Or, to give them due credit, they have no *opinions*. They are too acute and quick sighted for that. Probabilities, in their scale of evidence, there are none. All is intuition, or, at the very least, demonstration. The difficult process of searching after truth, by sifting and weighing evidence, they leave for dull, plodding, skeptical, people. As for them, and such geniuses as they, who are blessed with the gift of seeing things at a glance, such process is unnecessary. Indeed, they feel themselves above it. It is superfluous on another account, since it is their right to assert for truth whatever they do not certainly know to be false.

Besides all this, such persons, however rude in other respects, have their minds so trained and disciplined, that their faculties of belief are brought under complete subjection to their powers of will; so that it is really no figure of speech to say that they believe what they please. And, as they say what they believe, they must not forsooth be condemned as liars, whatever untruths they may choose to utter, seeing they have in the first place chosen to believe them: so that, should they assert that the sun does not shine at noon-day, we must in charity think that they speak the truth; though we might claim the liberty to doubt the fact. These are the pests of society.

Horace has finely satirized the character of such in his Epistle to Lollius, where he describes the

“Arperitas agrestis et inconcinna gravis que,
 “Quae, se commendat tonsa cute, dentibus atris;
 “Dum vult libertas dici mera, veraque virtus—

a disposition which, he goes on to say,

—— “rixatur de lana saepe caprina,
 “Propugnat nugis armatus: “Scilicet ut non
 “Sit mihi prima fides, et, vere quod placet ut non
 “Acriter elatrem, pretium aetas altera sordet.”

In concluding this part of my discourse, I would exhort you to proceed, in all your thoughts, words and deeds, upon a maxim which is the very opposite to that adopted by those licentious talkers, whom I have just now described, and to state nothing for true which you do not know to be true, true in an exact correspondence between the views which you actually entertain and those which you mean to express. And remember, that sweeping and positive assertions, except in the abstract sciences, are rarely, if ever, entirely true. Universal truths there are but few. There, are few rules without their exceptions; few good characters without a blemish; few bad ones without a virtue; hardly any virtuous action without some defect: and rarely a crime which is in all its parts, criminal.

The sun itself has its spots. There is none good but One that is God.

If there is a maxim which is universally applicable, and never in any case to be violated, it is the one I am now endeavoring to explain. The way in which it is most commonly violated, is by dealing in rash and unqualified assertions.

The most aggravated species which belongs to the genus of wilful falsehood, is that which proceeds from malice in the liar, and is denominated slander.

The most atrocious degree of slander, is, where the slanderer lays to the charge of another, whom he knows to be innocent, that very thing of which he himself is guilty.

And, to cap this climax of baseness and depravity, this further circumstance must be added, that the slanderer vents his slanders in so covert away as to escape responsibility, and in terms so indefinite as not to admit of refutation.

These however are topics, which cannot now be discussed.

What remains is to offer some things to your consideration, which may serve to fix in your minds a sentiment of deep detestation against the evil to which veracity is opposed.

And, in the first place, I will remark that among men veracity is made a point of honor. So that a man who loses his character for veracity, can expect to hold, no longer, a place among that class of people, who treat each other with mutual respect and confidence. With persons of any refinement and sensibility this species of excommunication must be most horrible to the feelings; as it is disastrous also in its consequences. But, what I would have you particularly to notice, is the effect which this very consideration itself must have upon the mind of the individual, who is conscious to himself of having violated his duty in that particular which is made the point of honor. A man will be *careful* on this point. The vital energies of his character are there collected. It is the citadel. If that be stormed, all is lost. If a traitor from within open its door, disgrace and ruin enter. I say ruin. For I am not speaking of reputation, which a lying tongue may take away: but of character, a thing which no tongue but the man's own tongue can injure. The citadel *must*, I say, be opened from *within*: otherwise it is impregnable. A man knows this. His conscience tells him this: and, whatever force of character he has, it will be summoned for the defence of this point. Surrender this and see the desolation! Conscience is defiled: the heart is sunk and overwhelmed under a sense of its own baseness; moral strength lies prostrate: hope has fled.—worse still, the fortress has changed masters, and, the black banner

of the Prince of darkness waves in triumph over its battlements.

It is hardly possible for a liar to pass long undetected; and when detected his reputation too is gone—gone irretrievably. For, however lenient the world may be to offenders against other laws, it shews no mercy to offenders against this law of its own enacting, by which veracity is made among men a point of honor; and it opens no way by which even the repentant may return to occupy the once forfeited position. So that, except in a community of liars, such as Crete, a liar cannot hope to meet with favor or respect. This makes the renovation of his character still the more difficult. Indeed, the path of repentance, like the way upward from the infernal regions as described by Virgil, in a passage which has become too trite to need quoting now, is, in all cases, hard to travel: in this case it is next to impossible. The confirmed liar is, of all reprobates, the most irreclaimable. People have confessed other sins of which they have been guilty, but who ever heard of the case of a man standing up in the face of the world and saying “I have lied!” And yet a man must do this, who has lied to the world, before either God or the world will pardon him. Think, think, while yet innocent in this matter, how much it concerns you to remain so.

In the next place, I would remark that it should be an inducement to you to cherish and cultivate veracity, that the possession of this virtue will enable you to discern it in others, and to make them your friends. It may not enable you, it is true, to perceive, in all cases, where it is wanting: for, as Satan has the power of transforming himself into an angel of light, so has mendacity the art of passing for a while undetected under the guise of truth: so that, though veracious yourselves, you may notwithstanding be so imposed upon as to believe that truth exists in the character where it is not. But, possessing it yourselves, you will always be able to discern it, where it is. And this is a very desirable talent, and one which none of the sons of falsehood ever can possess. Place them where they will be in the midst of honest and true men, conversant with them every day; and yet they will never know it. The light still shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. The liar, supposing the true man to be like himself, will not understand him, but will adjust himself not to what he actually sees in the conduct and professions of the other, but to something which he takes for granted is concealed under appearances; and so he will be *out* in his calculations. And then, acting on a false supposition, he will compel the true man to make a movement which was foreign from his original intentions: and then the false man will find him-

self in the position of one that is outwitted and over reached—outwitted and overreached he has been indeed; but it has been by himself. His cunning has woven a net in which he himself has been caught: the hunter has been devoured by his own dogs: that which is written has been verified, “he that diggeth a pit shall fall into it.” Men rejoice when they see it—and he, the man of falsehood, who believed not in appearances, laments that he has fallen upon evil times, in which honest and true men are not to be found. So Janes and Jambres, who withstood the legate of the true God, thought him only a more powerful magician than themselves,—till it came to the *last experiment*, when they were forced to acknowledge the truth. And here also the analogy holds. There is a last experiment:—a trial which will convince the liars.—But that is in the future.—May we all, by a life of truth, be prepared for that last trial!

At the close of the war of our revolution, Dr. Franklin took the lead in conducting those diplomatic negotiations, which ended in the acknowledgement of our Independence by the nations of Europe. His artless, straight-forward way of doing things puzzled and disconcerted the intriguers more than the most crooked and disingenuous and crafty management could have done. They had not been used to it: they did not look for it; and so, when it met them, they knew not what to make of it. And so it is in the common affairs of life; a man who will speak the truth and act in good faith, making no false professions, will puzzle the liars and find such as are true men, that is if such there be. And such there are, almost every where. Diogenes, it is said, lit a candle at noon and walked with it up and down in the streets of Athens, saying that he was looking if he could find any where an honest man. Diogenes was a fool. He had seen better without the candle. It served only to blind him: and though true and honest men were as rare among us as they were in Athens in the days of this cynic—and indeed the Athenians and almost all the Greeks were remarkably addicted to lying—yet a man might find them, provided he would throw away all dishonest artificial lights of his own kindling, and content himself to use his eyes in Heaven’s pure light of truth and walk by that. Now there is nothing which a true man so much loves as truth. No tie binds men so strongly together as the discernment of truth in one another. This, then, is a good reason why you should cherish it, cultivate it, and live according to its dictates, that you may be able to find such men and enjoy their confidence. As for such as want this virtue, have as little to do with them as possible; and if they revile you, count it an honor.

Further still: while a lie persisted in will inevitably, in the long run, lead into a labyrinth of difficulties from which there is no escape; truth, as it is always consistent with itself and with the course of Providence, will always conduct to happy issues. This faith may have appearances against it for a time. Therefore it is, that we say, it will be as we have stated, "*in the long run.*" Falsehood rises early, and sets out with speed, and it often has a long run, indeed, before Divine Providence, which is slow but sure in its march, overtakes it with retribution. But the time will come, when it shall be overtaken; and in the meantime, the man of truth may rest in the faith that it shall be so, and in the enjoyment of, what is of vastly more account as it respects present happiness than all that was ever gained by successful lying—a calm and tranquil mind, self-respect, and the pleasure of an approving conscience. These are the best possessions. Learn to value them worthily, and then, you will assiduously cultivate the virtue which produces them.

In the last place, I remark that the high grade of importance in which this virtue of which I am speaking is placed in the Sacred Scriptures, shews what we ought to think of it, how highly prize and ardently cherish it; and with what holy fear and intense abhorrence we should watch to shun the slightest deviation from that good and right way which it prescribes. Most earnestly do I intreat you to make the Holy Bible your vade-mecum, your constant companion, the man of your council the guide of your way. Study its holy precepts in the light of its sublime doctrines, and you will see that veracity is indispensable to your acceptance before the God of truth, whose word has declared that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

To what I have said on the nature and importance of veracity I shall subjoin a few remarks on the difficulty of maintaining it in practice; and so conclude. This I think necessary by way of caution, lest, thinking it an easy thing, you should actually fail in some of those severe trials which certainly await you in futurity, should life be prolonged, and especially should it be your lot to occupy any conspicuous and highly responsible station in society.

It is, indeed, natural and easy to speak the truth, there being no propensity in man's nature to falsify, as there is to do other things which are wrong. Lying is not a root, but a branch of the tree of corruption. It springs from other vices. Whoever commits it has either done some evil thing, which, to avoid the shame of having done it, he denies; or he is bent upon accomplishing some object, which he thinks, can not be accomplished without lying; or he is actuated by some malignant passion such as envy which prompts

him to utter slander with the view to hurt the reputation of the person whom he hares; or possibly, if, under the influence of these evil dispositions, he has already formed the habit of speaking falsely, he may go on to do so from the mere force of habit, or he may lie, in imitation of others, as the giddy and unthinking part of the community do, who when one or two of the pack open, are ready with their voices to swell the howling concert; or he may lie, as travellers in foreign countries are said to do, who tell wonderful tales of what they have *not* seen there, in order to afford entertainment to their hearers or readers; or he may lie, and print his lies in a book, for the purpose of making money by the sale of it; or he may lie out of vanity, to make people think him greater, richer or wiser than he is; or, finally, he may lie, to avoid the inconvenience of suffering what must be suffered by those who *witness* or bear testimony, in the cause of truth. Now, if a man be under the influence of a disposition to be governed by these motives, of disingenuousness, ambition, avarice, envy, jealousy malice, levity, caprice, evil-sympathy, a love of the marvellous, or vanity, or any other such motives as are incompatible with perfect integrity of character and purity of heart; he is in fact false and unsound, and, on occasion, that is, if an adequate temptation be presented, he will turn out, actually, a liar. And if this be so, there is no dependence to be placed in the veracity of one whose mind is not exercised and trained in *all* moral virtue "An undisciplined mind has," it has been said, "no moral principles." It is the truth: and we may say with equal truth that veracity, like the dome of some great temple, rests upon the entire fabric of the virtues while it surmounts, completes, and adorns them all. It is never found alone. It cannot exist alone. It cannot be learned alone. That which is taught thus in the school of honor is a base counterfeit.

I was once asked by a young man if I could admit him into this seat of learning for two weeks:—it was all the time he could spare; and in that time he thought he could learn what he wanted—English Grammar. "But we cannot teach English Grammar in so short a time."—"Others do it"—"No Sir, others promise to do it: but it cannot be done."—"Why not, it is not so long."—"But we cannot teach it to any advantage without teaching other things along with it; such as something of Logic, something of Metaphysics, something of the nature of language itself.—"That is strange! Can't you teach English Grammar by itself?"—"You are a farmer?"—"Yes."—How long does it take you to fatten a beef?"—"Something like eight weeks."—"But I want only a quarter of beef;—can't you fatten for me a single quarter, in the fourth of that time, which will

be two weeks?" (Shaking his head) "No, Sir: No, Sir! If I fatten one quarter the other three quarters must get fat as fast."—"Well: now you see why I cannot undertake to teach you English Grammar in two weeks. It is only one quarter of the beef, and as the other quarters must go along with it, you must allow us four times two weeks.

There is, as Cicero has well said, a common bond which unites together all the virtues. They receive and yield to each other mutual strength and firmness, like the stones in an arch. Veracity is the key stone. Or, to vary the figure, it is like that clear, beautiful glow of the countenance, which is at once the sign and product of a sound and healthy state of the whole bodily system; and which, when the health is gone, goes with it, and cannot be brought back, though it may be imperfectly imitated by the "cosmetic powers" and the arts of the toilet.

Consider the case of those primitive witnesses for the truth of Christianity, who could not hold fast their veracity, but by the surrender of their lives. The cruel sufferings to which they submitted might have been escaped, had they been willing to perform an act so trivial in itself as the casting of a pinch of frankincense on a heathen altar. To do so would have been to act a lie; and, therefore, these holy men chose death under the most excruciating tortures, rather than do it. True, there is no danger of martyrdom now: but are there no sufferings to be endured among us by such as are tenacious of the truth? Are there no advantages any longer to be gained, or evils to be shunned, by a man's professing what he does not believe? Is it reasonable to think, that among the different creeds, political and religious, which are professed in *un-*the world at this day, there is not one, which contains a portion of *truth*; which, when a man has once discovered, though he may have been brought up in the belief of it, it would be disingenuous in him and an offence against veracity, not to discard, and on account of it, the entire creed which contains it? But should he discard it, would not the sect, or party, which is founded and organized upon it, discard *him*? Aye; and would not the biggotted among them be apt, moreover, to denounce and vilify him as a renegade, an apostate a traitor? And is such treatment a light matter, and easy to be borne? Yet who ever loves truth better than a party—and every man of veracity does this—must lay his accounts to meet with such treatment. For party is a great tyrant, and allows no reserved rights. But with every man of veracity the rights of truth *are* reserved rights and, when any mandate, emanate from what quarter it may, or come arrayed in what terrors it may athwart the domain of these

his reserved rights, he becomes, as that, a nullifier, and, staking his all upon the issue, pronounces, Veto. Now it is very clear, that, often, it may not be either pleasant or profitable for one to do this thing. So that, if a man would follow truth he must be ready to forsake all, that he may follow it. He must stand prepared to turn his back upon all worldly advantages, and to regard poverty, the loss of reputation and popular favor, the frowns of the powerful, and the scorn of such as worship Fortune, as to be chosen rather than to turn aside from following it. *Self denial is at the foundation of all moral discipline.*

Young Gentlemen: I have now set before you the nature and importance of veracity; the necessity, in order to be perfect in it, of purifying the mind from every evil passion and every wrong desire. Let it be your earnest study in future life to cultivate this excellent virtue.

Keep a guard over your hearts. Keep a guard over your minds. Remember that evil in the one will becloud the other. "Mala mens: malus animus" says the proverb; and I may add; malus animus: mala lingua.

Admit no thought without charity. Form no opinion without evidence.

Bridle your tongues: utter nothing rashly.

If you should fall into error, retract it. If you commit a fault, confess it. If you do a wrong, repair it.

Fulfil your engagements; but take care not to commit yourselves to any cause that is not good, or that is even doubtful.

Be careful, in reporting what you hear, to omit nothing which may be necessary to a fair understanding of it.

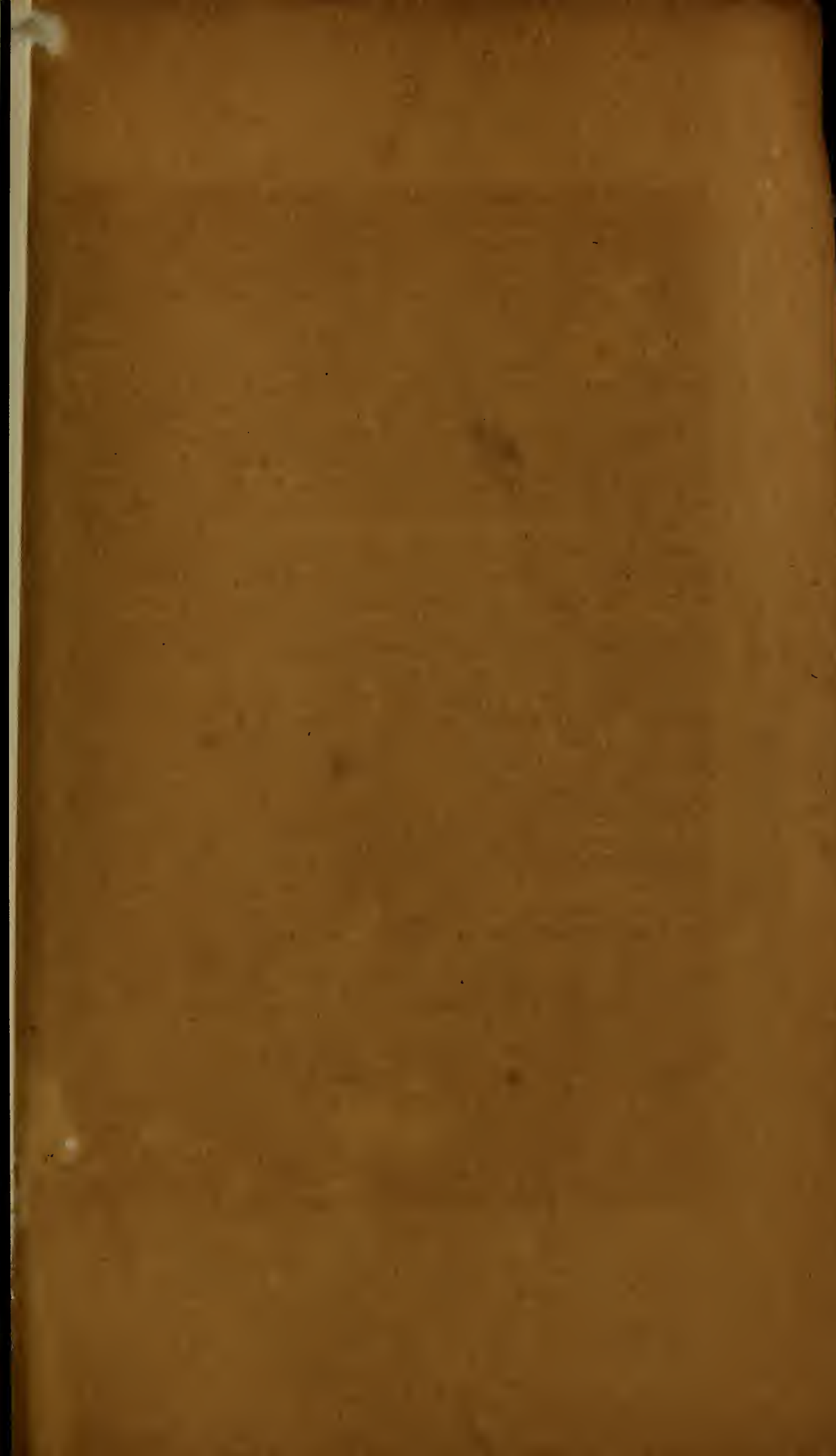
Be candid, in controversy, in dealings in rivalships; admitting the truth, though it makes against you.

Above all, be true to all who have special claims on your regard: first, to your God; next to parents and other benefactors; and then, to your country.

Be true to yourselves; and deserve your own good opinion of yourselves; but in that make large allowances; for the judge is partial.

In a word, let all your course be guided by truth.—And so may the God of truth have you always in His most holy and gracious keeping, and bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen!

Nov. 3, 1880



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